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ABSTRACT

This position paper summarizes the views of the 12-member Day Care Task Force to the Child Development Associate (CDA) Consortium, following a series of colloquies held by the task force on topics related to staff training and assessment in the day care field. Topics covered are: (1) definition of day care for children, (2) specific competencies required of day care staff beyond the basic CDA certification, (3) assessment procedures, (4) credentialing procedures, (5) eligibility requirements, and (6) special problems. Day care is defined as a multidisciplinary, nonexclusionary extension of the family, operating in an extended time frame at the request of families who use it. The CDA performance criteria are judged adequate to meet primary needs in day care but lacking in the areas of human relations, individual differences, principles of learning, self-knowledge, objective observation, listening skills, and feeling tone. The task force consensus on the CDA assessment procedures for day care workers is that the additional competencies should be recognized, that procedures should be flexible enough to take account of artificial differences between full and part day staff, and that observations should be extended from 3 hours to a full day session. It is urged that the credentialing system remain independent of existing licensing or credentialing processes and remain regionalized for flexibility. (GO)

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DAY CARE AND THE CDA; 1974: A POSITION PAPER

BY

THE DAY CARE TASK FORCE

TO

THE CDA CONSORTIUM

PS 008337

The Child Development Associate Consortium

January, 1975

The Child Development Associate Consortium is engaged in the development of a system for competency-based assessment of the skills of personnel who work with young children (aged 3-5) in child care centers.

The Consortium recognizes that American children live in various social settings, having differing cultural heritages and economic backgrounds. Their preschool experiences take place in surroundings that differ vastly.

These differences, so inherent in our national life, demand a flexible assessment system - one adaptable to different clientele and conditions. In its search for flexibility, the Consortium has sponsored a number of colloquies with professional groups representing specific ethnic minorities, to get their insights and experience. In this colloquy we are looking for information from professionals who concern themselves with developmental day care.

This position paper results from the work of the Day Care Task Force over the past year. Beginning with the initial meeting of the Day Care Colloquy in Atlanta, Georgia, in November 1973, the Day Care Task Force has sponsored four colloquies throughout the United States and collected data by questionnaire.

At the second meeting of the entire Day Care Task Force in Washington, D. C., in November 1974, this paper was planned. While the Consortium does not necessarily endorse the points of view found in this paper, we are very grateful to have the concerns and opinions of the Day Care Task Force. We value their views on the similarities and differences in the competencies needed by CDA's working the "long day" of the day care center, as compared to those in other kinds of child care centers.

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DAY CARE AND THE CDA; 1974: A POSITION PAPER

BY

The Day Care Task Force to the CDA Consortium

The Day Care Advisory Task Force grew out of a Day Care Colloquy sponsored by the Child Development Associate Consortium in Atlanta, Georgia, in November, 1973. Twelve persons from throughout the United States who are actively involved in the Day Care field were invited to participate in the colloquy. The purpose of the colloquy was to have representatives from the day care community evaluate the Consortium's efforts to date from a day care perspective. At the Atlanta meeting the participants agreed to form a Task Force that would serve in an advisory capacity to the Consortium.

A small planning group met at the Consortium office in Washington, D.C., in March, 1974, to determine what direction the Task Force should take. The group decided to focus on two areas raised at the Atlanta meeting: 1) the identification of competencies needed for day care personnel, and 2) obtaining greater participation from day care practitioners and consumers regarding the identification of these competencies. A plan was developed and approved by all Task Force members that required each member either to hold a colloquy in his/her area of the country or to send out questionnaires relating to these issues.

Successful colloquies were held in Boston, Massachusetts; Minneapolis, Minnesota; Dallas, Texas; and Waterville, Maine. Questionnaires were sent out to persons in the Washington, D.C., Metropolitan Area.

The second meeting of the entire Day Care Task Force was held in Washington, D.C., in November, 1974. The focus of this meeting was to develop plans for a position statement on "CDA and the Day Care Community." The following statement is a product of the work of the Day Care Task Force over the past year.

Day Care for Children Defined

Child day care is a comprehensive, nonexclusionary, multidisciplinary service which provides support for individual family units by acting as an extension of the family in assuming temporary responsibility for the care and protection of groups of children, for some portion of a twenty-four-hour day throughout the year, as requested by the child's parent(s) or legal quardian. Day care is a service which is significantly distinct from all other existing social and educational institutions and must be recognized as such in order effectively to assess the competencies of individuals employed in the service.

- Day care being an extension of the family requires a sensitivity and responsiveness to the nuclear family unit and the subculture within which that unit exists.

- Day care being multidisciplinary requires the provision of a balanced and well-integrated composite of services which cross many of the traditional disciplines such as education, social service, and psychology.

- Day care being nonexclusionary requires that while it is neither essential nor feasible in many circumstances for day care to provide all human services, there is an indirect responsibility to assist children and their families in obtaining legal, medical, and dental services as well as counseling and other needed services.

- Day care having an extended time frame, including operating for the entire twenty-four day and all year round, is required in the role of support to the family unit. The dictates of need by the family because of a variety of societal realities such as necessary mobility, single parenthood, and economics require a comprehensive, year-round service.

- Day care because of its requested nature is significantly set apart from other services such as public education in which participation is legally required rather than optional for the recipient.

It is crucial that child day care be recognized in context with its purpose -- its very reason for being -- because only in understanding its purpose can one clearly differentiate day care from other services. What happens to and for the family unit as it relates to day care goes far beyond the scope of other services which impact the unit. What happens to and for the child reflects a significant difference between day care and other services -- not a difference in quality, but a difference in quantity. The quality of the interpersonal relationship between child and adult must equal that of all other services, but must be sustained for a significantly larger period of time. The quality of educational service must equal that of any other educational institution but must be far more inclusive. The quality of nutritional, hygienic, group management, and all other aspects bearing on the life of a child must not only be equal to that "offered" by the separate disciplines, but also must be far more enduring over time and exceedingly well organized in order to provide the balance of effort and integration of components necessary to the total development of the child.

(The concept of equality assumes that the separate disciplines are functioning at the highest possible level given the current state of knowledge of their disciplines. This is not true, for instance, of public education today where many principles of learning, group dynamics, social development, intellectual development, etc., while known, are not used in the process of public education. In such a case, we feel that the educational component in day care must be superior to that which is practiced in most public schools, in order to be adequate.)

Day Care and Specific Competencies

A primary issue confronted at national, regional and local levels is the question of whether there are competencies demanded of people employed in day care which are significantly different from those required for the

part-day employed. The consensus of the Task Force was that on the surface there appeared to be a significant difference. This initial conclusion, however, seemed to be a product of several artificial conditions:

- The Child Development Associate (CDA) program was simply not considering day care as effectively as it might.

- The "long day" was seen as requiring special abilities.

- The purpose of day care is different from part-day services.

- The day care system (low pay, poor working conditions, inadequate physical and financial resources, etc.) required "special" persons.

- The broad range of services offered required an expanded knowledge base.

The current consensus is that while there are some competencies specific to day care, these might best be reflected in a "special citation," "advanced competency," or "specialized competency" beyond the basic CDA certification. Day care is not unique in this respect. There are a number of situations -- such as those dealing with groups of handicapped children, emotionally disturbed children, and non-English-speaking children and families -- which require specific competencies but which do not negate the importance of the basic CDA requirements.

- The Child Development Associate Consortium (CDAC) has listened carefully and has reflected in recent publications many aspects of the day care situation which were not initially included.

- The long day and the "system" as it now exists are artificial factors which need to be addressed from a totally different perspective. To require special stamina of an individual in day care is much the same as initiating "body building" training in order that "ten year olds can work in the mines."

- That the purpose of day care varies from that of part-day programs does not necessitate a significant difference in competencies for dealing with children. However, there is the possibility that acting as an extension of the family unit might require some additional competencies. For instance, the decision-making role of parents whose children are separated from them for longer hours may be more crucial, requiring concomitant skills in adult interpersonal relationships from a CDA. It is equally possible, however, that part-day programs do not sufficiently consider the role that they do (or should) play in respect to the family. It is conceivable that instead of indicating a special competency required in full-day programs, we are pointing to a weakness in the part-day system.

- Careful examination leads us to believe that although part-day programs do not require emphasis on nutrition and naps, for instance, that the CDA should demonstrate competence in nutrition and transitional activities which are more significant in day care. Again, perhaps competency in part-day needs to reflect a broadened perspective, an expanded knowledge base, rather than viewing day care as significantly different.

In sum, the Task Force believes that the current competencies adequately reflect the needs of day care in the primary sense; that there might be reason to explore a specialized competency for a variety of activities; and that some artificial requirements of day care should be handled through the assessment process rather than the competency criteria.

Performance Criteria - The Missing Parts

There was general agreement that the Performance Criteria as currently drafted are well organized and comprehensive except in the following areas:

- Human relations - there is a basic fund of knowledge and variety of behaviors which can reflect competency in interacting with others. This is the sum of a person's competence in his world of interpersonal relations, a basic relational Gestalt. "Specific competencies plus a categorical incompetence (in this basic area of relationships) can still equal incompetence."

- Individual differences - while some attention is directed to knowing an individual child's capabilities, too little emphasis is placed on the base of information which would provide for awareness of individual differences, particularly deviations from the norm. With the growing awareness of the value of early detection and intervention, this will be an extremely important component of preschool programs.

- Principles of learning - the efforts of preschool programs are, at every stage in one way or another, related to the learning process. It is crucial that the principles and processes of learning be fully understood. Conditioning, rate of learning, stimulus generalization/discrimination, reinforcement, modeling and imitation, etc., must be thoroughly understood.

- Self knowledge - there does not appear to be a requirement that the CDA possess knowledge about himself. It is crucial that a CDA's strengths and weaknesses, values, adjustive techniques, methods of interacting with others, etc., be known to him or her. This is not simply a "nice thing to do," but vital when attempting to cope with others.

- Objective observation and listening skills - consistent reference was made regarding the need for competency in observing behavior and environment. Since it is clearly desirable to relate to individuals (children, parents, and other staff) from their point of reference, it is necessary that the CDA see and hear what is happening -- not what he would like to see happen or what he sees as a distortion of his own projected needs.

- Feeling tone - the CDA projects in all of his interactions a basic mood or constellation of feelings which are both readily observable and highly significant in creating a tone for interaction. It is neither necessary nor desirable that everyone function alike, but it is unacceptable to project a model of anger, high anxiety, rigidity, compulsiveness, depression and so forth.

In view of the role of set and order of material presentation, it is recommended that the critical tasks and functional areas be reordered so that those factors which are most significant, appear to be most significant.

There was considerable support given to the concept that, as an end product, what is being sought should be a functional integration of theory into practice; that approval as a CDA implies a knowledge base which is demonstrated in the behavior of the candidate. It would, therefore, be most appropriate to approach the performance criteria and competency areas both theoretically and in the assessment process in a more integrated fashion. The "final product" must reflect not only a cognitive unity (that is, an interwoven network of understandings about child development in its broadest sense) but also a behavioral consistency showing a direct link between knowledge and action.

As the knowledge and performance criteria are currently written, it was the group consensus that a person functioning at the +1 level would be adequate as an assistant to a teacher.

Assessment Procedures

As previously noted, a great deal of effort has been expended in the past year in considering the difference(s) between day care (particularly its full-day nature) and part-day programs in regard to potential requirements for effective functioning by a CDA. While there is some reason to think of such differences as requiring different competencies, it was agreed that:

1. Additional competencies for day care should be recognized and dealt with as a specialty level beyond the basic CDA.

2. The assessment procedure must be flexible and sophisticated enough to reconcile some of the apparent but highly artificial differences.

It is necessary that the assessment time period suggested for observation (3 hours) be extended to a full day in the case of day care workers. Although basic competencies may not vary significantly, there is greater emphasis placed on such factors as transitional activities in the full-day program. Thus, the observation must cover those aspects of performance which would not be fully evidenced in a three-hour morning session. Methods of coping with meals, naps, pacing for the long day and so forth, must be assessed.

Assessors must be particularly skilled in day care observations with respect to the following:

- possible limitations in candidate's verbal expression.

- insuring that the interview process flows from or is cued by the performance of the candidate.

- in seeking to determine the knowledge base, use of question "why?" in respect to specific behavior of candidate.

- the impact of the specific environment in which the candidate is operating as it may detract from his competencies.

Assessors in day care must:

- have considerable experience in the field of day care. It is unacceptable to ask an individual to judge competency in an unfamiliar area.

- have flexibility and available time to follow the process through.

- maintain awareness of the impact of the "long day" and other artificial negatives which may significantly affect the candidate.

- not reside in the immediate area. There is good reason to justify the assessor's being from outside the candidate's community: It would provide for some objectivity in the process; it would add national credibility to the system; and it would provide greater potential for reciprocity.

Credential Procedures

Because of the major educational component found in day care programs and the tendency (clearly unwise) to label those working with children as "teachers" and "teacher aides," it has become natural to think of day care employees as basically functioning within an "educational system." This is immediately unacceptable and clearly relates to the credentialing process.

The foundation of the efforts toward a CDA program is based in no one existing traditional discipline and, therefore, needs to be seen as a new profession. Careful review indicates that Developmental Psychology approximates most closely the activities and necessary knowledge base of the CDA primarily because of the multidisciplinary nature of Developmental Psychology. Even this discipline, however, is not sufficiently similar to warrant a "piggy-back" approach, nor does the field of education have sufficient scope and broad concern necessary to day care, any more than social work or allied medical fields. The emphasis in day care is on the process of nurturing the total development of the child, which is a whole greater than the sum of its parts.

Care must be given regarding the role of the Parent-Community Representative. While this person must play a strong and obvious part in the assessment process, there are potential dangers if such a parent is a highly verbal leader in local day care politics with a personal dislike for the candidate, or if the parent has little knowledge of the candidate because of limited contact.

The CDAC should maintain its concern for credentialing individuals. It should not, at least in the near future, become involved in accreditation of programs. The basis upon which CDA is founded is that of performance evaluation. Institutions of higher education could easily manipulate such a system into the same process of degree granting which as we already know is not effective. With adequate external controls it is possible that in the future programs could be developed which meet the necessary requirements for performance-based observation. However, this is unlikely, since there is a significant difference between the functioning of a student and that of an

individual who is educationally independent and "employed in the real world."

The credentialing system must be maintained independently by CDAC and not become an appendage of some existing licensing or credentialing process. While credentialing on a national basis must be maintained in some fashion, regionalization could be effective in adding flexibility.

The candidate's portfolio should be strengthened by the inclusion of some statement by the candidate giving his general overview of children -- what he believes about children -- or a general philosophy of sorts. What is understood and accepted about the nature of childhood is the basis for interacting with children. It is vital that the candidate be at least aware of the fact that his behavior does reflect his beliefs, and that consistency in behavior, or lack of it, could well be a function of confused or conflicting beliefs.

Eligibility Requirements

While there was not unanimity regarding the entire spectrum of eligibility requirements (i.e., should or could age be a factor, considering the variety of existing state laws; can a process such as maturity be defined or measured; does "enrollment in a CDA-oriented program" have special significance?), there was consensus on the following:

The candidate must have:

- one calendar year
- of supervised experience
- working full time
- with children
- in a licensed program.

Supervised experience must be validated by the supervisor; full time is based on the nature of the program (for instance, working half-day on a half-day program would be considered full time); with children means in the "classroom;" and in a licensed program reflects concern that, if the program is eligible for licensure, it should be licensed.

Special Problems

Three major issues which have been touched upon briefly need to be highlighted. One is the discipline of education. There was unanimous agreement that the system of public education must not be allowed to subsume, dilute, or in any manner bastardize CDA or the field of day care. The public education system is a

- conceptually narrow
- legal entity
- concerned with teaching as opposed to learning

- which is not responsive to parents

- is unable to effectively use existing knowledge in its process

- or to respond quickly to new knowledge

- has few teachers knowledgeable about preschool children

- and offers very few alternative programs.

A second major concern is the development of training programs, procedures or systems to support the CDA. There are an unlimited number of options available to assist candidates in developing competencies, but they will need to be worked through on a local/regional basis. Some of these options are:

1. exchange days with other centers;

2. consultants to help with problem areas;

3. consistent processes of staff evaluations;

4. monetary reimbursement for further training;

5. lists of resource agencies, training facilities, professional organizations made available to centers (a supermarket for trai);

6. coordination of workshops
   . . make more available - accessible to all day care workers
   . . develop workshops to be given at different training levels
   . . practical and supportive workshops
   . . follow-up programs;

7. video taping in centers;

8. consultant or model to work along side of staff in actual situation;

9. clearing house of human and material resources;

10. Department of Public Welfare or Office of Child Development agencies to send lists of all resources to all licensed centers;

11. core group of trainers as an on-going resource;

12. community service programs;

13. extension courses from existing training programs;

14. mobile units with resource materials that go to centers;

15. feedback from educational facilities that use centers for training;

16. community service (6 weeks) in community colleges for follow-up of graduates of two-year programs.

The third concern is the basically incompetent and weak support system known as child care. The "laying bare" of the current inadequacies of the child care system must not reflect on the competencies of individuals involved in the system. It is a national responsibility to provide enough support for day care so that it can function for the benefit of children and their families.* One of the nation's largest "rip-offs" currently being perpetuated is the business/industrial complex rape of the day care system. Inadequacies are endured by children, family, and staff in order that parents can produce for the profit of industry. There are long hours (for both children and staff), too many children for too few staff, poor physical facilities, poor wages, poor fringe benefits, poor equipment, low status, and little opportunity for advanced training in the current system. Until such a situation is remedied, we can have only minimal hope that the CDA program will function as it must.

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*A repeated concern of the Task Force Relates to the role of the CDA program as part of the national support system for child care. The built-in narrowness of focus, defining the CDA only in terms of group (center) care of children 3 to 5 years of age, fails to support the needs and realities of child care in this country, where children under age 3 are in care and where the majority of that care is currently provided in family day care homes. The Task Force recommends that CDAC gives attention to broadening its focus.

For more details on the activities of the Day Care Task Force, write: Ms. Canary Girardeau, Director of Credentialing and Community Relations, The Child Development Associate Consortium, 7315 Wisconsin Avenue, Washington, D. C., 20014.